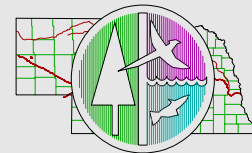


District 6 — Interstate 80 Lakes Fish Survey Results



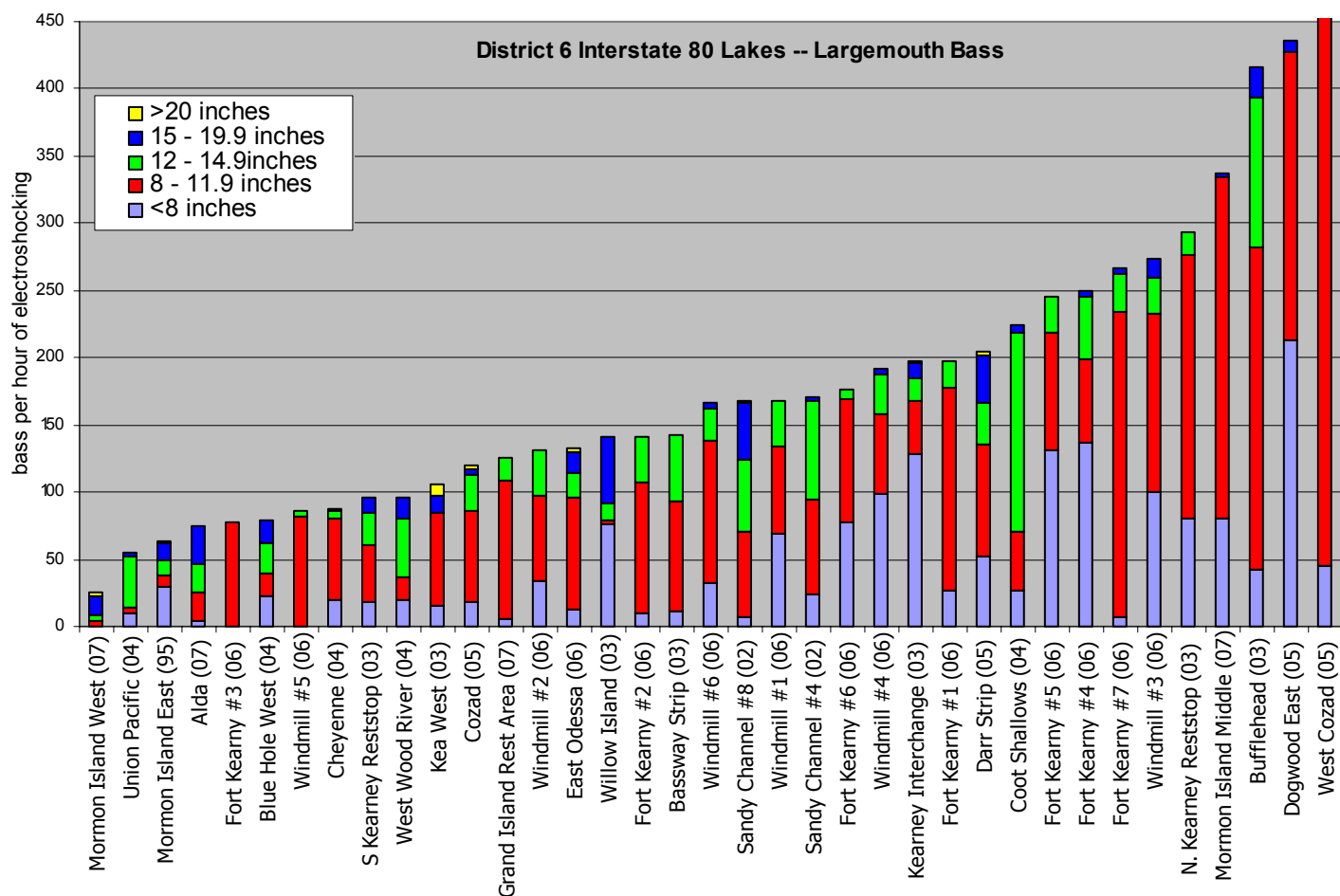
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission— Spring 2008

Brad Eifert, Fisheries Biologist

Spanning a stretch of roughly 150 miles along Interstate 80 from Grand Island to Hershey, there are 58 small lakes available for public fishing. District 6 Fisheries staff has management responsibility on approximately 44 of these lakes from Grand Island to Gothenburg. These man-made lakes, most of which were created for fill material when the Interstate system was developed in the 1960's, range in size from 1 to 40 acres. These sandy bottom lakes have excellent shoreline access for anglers and contain the clear water and vegetation that species such as largemouth bass and bluegill thrive in. In addition to these species, most of the lakes contain channel catfish, while others have crappie, rock bass, walleye, and northern pike. Most of these lakes are surveyed on a five year rotation and the following graphs and text display these results.

Largemouth Bass

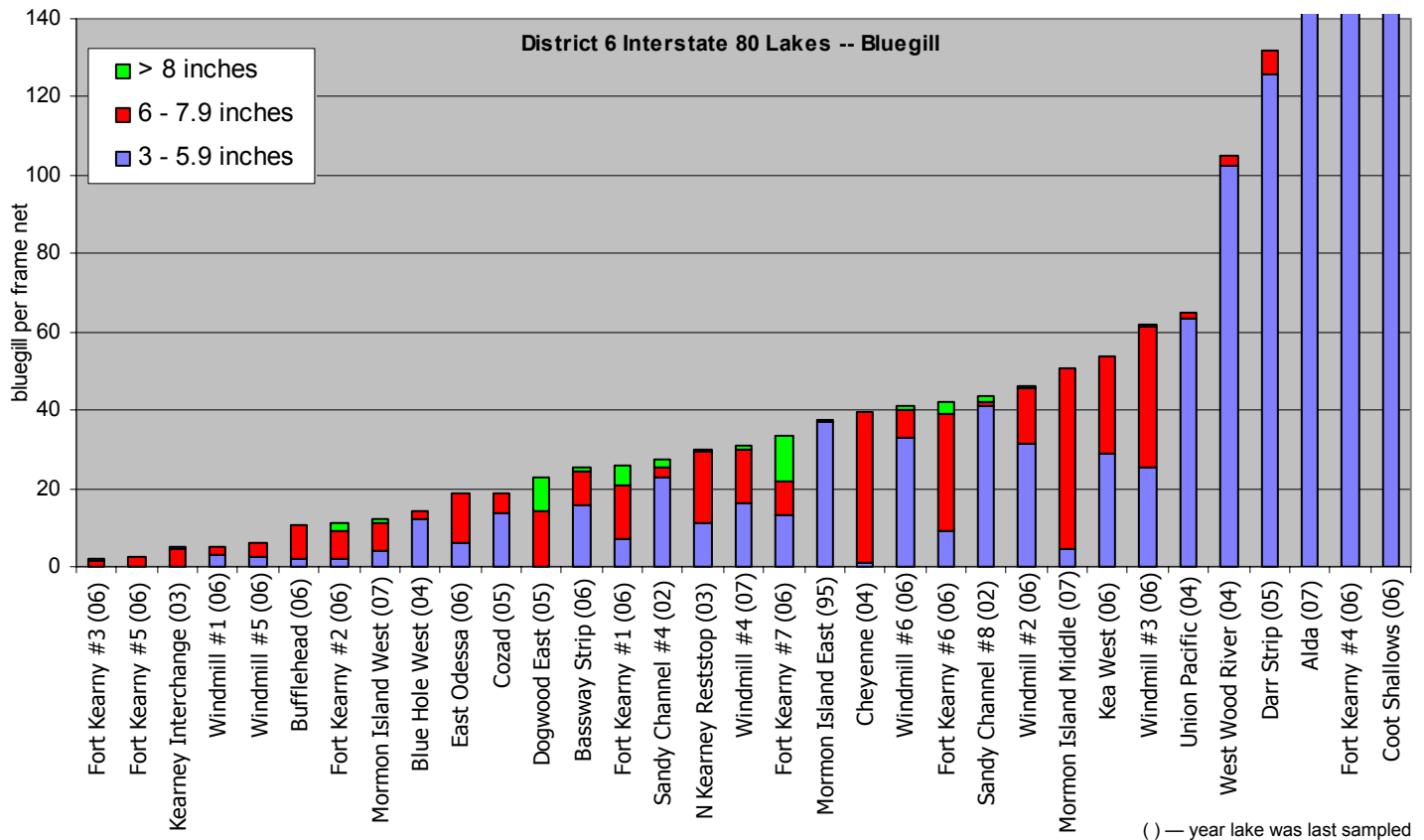
Largemouth bass are found in all of the Interstate lakes within the boundaries of District 6, with the exception of War Axe. Lakes with high densities of bass, where you could expect high catch rates, include the Windmill and Ft. Kearny Lakes, as well as Middle Mormon Island, Kearney Interchange, North Kearney Reststop, Coot Shallows, Dogwood East, West Cozad and East Gothenburg. Lakes that normally produce larger bass include Mormon Island West, Bufflehead, Blue Hole West, Sandy Channel #8, Willow Island, and Darr. All of the I-80 lakes within District 6 have a 15-inch minimum size limit on largemouth bass, except for Cheyenne, West Wood River, and War Axe which have a no harvest regulation for bass. Anglers are encouraged to practice catch and release on bass in the I-80 Lakes as they are easily over-harvested in these small lakes.



() — year lake was last sampled

Bluegill

Like bass, bluegill are also present in most of the I-80 lakes within District 6. While almost any of the lakes can be good places to catch bluegill, the best lakes to catch six to eight inch bluegill are Mormon Island Middle, Cheyenne, Windmill, Fort Kearny, Kea West, North Kearney Reststop and Cozad. Big bluegills, greater than eight inches, can be found in many of the lakes but they are not usually very abundant and their presence doesn't always last long once anglers find them. Some lakes that produce larger bluegill include Bassway Strip, Kearney Interchange, Sandy Channel (Lakes #4 & #8), Dogwood East and some of the lakes at Windmill and Ft. Kearny. Special regulations on bluegill for Interstate lakes include a 10-fish daily bag limit at Mormon Island, Windmill and Ft. Kearney. In addition, there is an 8-inch minimum size limit at Mormon Island and Windmill Lake #4.

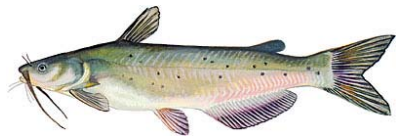


Other Species

Channel Catfish

Channel catfish are stocked in most of the Interstate Lakes on an alternate year basis. Windmill #4 and Fort Kearny #6 both have intensive catfish stocking and feeding programs, which increases abundance, average size and catchability of the catfish in those lakes. Other lakes with good potential for catfish include: Mormon Island West, Cheyenne, Bufflehead, Fort Kearny #2, Blue Hole West, Sandy Channel #1 and Darr.

Regulations pertaining to channel catfish daily bag limits were changed on January 1, 2008. The daily bag limit for channel catfish on the Interstate 80 Lakes east of Gothenburg has been reduced to three catfish per day. In addition, Fort Kearny #2 and Windmill #3 have been designated as catch and release only lakes for channel catfish. Additional information regarding these regulations can be found in the current online fishing guide at: <http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/fishing/guides/fishguide/2008FishGuide.pdf>.



Common carp

While most often thought of as a rough fish, the common carp can provide anglers with excellent angling opportunities in many of the Interstate 80 lakes. Trophy-sized common carp (15-25 pounds) can be found in low abundance at Bassway Strip, Bufflehead, Kea West, and Sandy Channel #8. More numerous, albeit smaller carp can be caught at Mormon Island West, Cheyenne, Blue Hole West, Sandy Channel #1, and Willow Island.



Other Species (continued)

Crappie

Crappie are found in many of the Interstate Lakes, but generally they are in fairly low abundance. Lakes with the highest densities of crappie include: Mormon Island West, Mormon Island Middle, Windmill Lakes 1, 3, and 4, Ft. Kearny #2, Kearney Interchange, Kea West, Coot Shallows, Blue Hole West and East Gothenburg.



Northern Pike

Northern pike are currently stocked in Alda Lake to provide extra predation on abundant panfish populations and provide anglers a local pike fishery. Pike were first stocked in 2002, with additional stockings occurring in 2004, 2005 and 2006. Pike from the original stocking could be approaching 40 inches. There is a 30-inch minimum size limit in effect for pike at this lake and anglers are encouraged to practice catch and release.



Rainbow Trout

Anglers also have the opportunity to catch rainbow trout during the fall, winter and early spring months at Windmill Lake #1. This lake is annually stocked with 6,000 10-inch rainbows to provide anglers a unique opportunity to catch trout in central Nebraska. The trout do not survive the warm summer months so angling for them ends in early May. There is a daily bag limit of seven trout.



Redear Sunfish

Redear sunfish have been introduced into several Interstate 80 Lakes during the past several years. Redear, or shellcrackers as they are commonly referred to in the South, have a preference for eating snails and mollusks and require clear water and abundant vegetation. This type of habitat is common in many of the Interstate Lakes and should allow for this species to thrive. Waters where you can currently find redear sunfish include Mormon Island Middle, War Axe, South Kearney Rest Stop, West Cozad and East Gothenburg.



Rock Bass

Rock bass are rare in most parts of the State, but can be found in many of the Interstate Lakes. Some lakes with fishable rock bass populations include: Kea West, Union Pacific, Sandy Channel #8, Dogwood East, Darr, Cozad and West Cozad. Rock bass can also be found in low densities in most of the lakes at Windmill SRA.



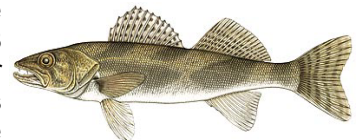
Smallmouth Bass

Smallmouth bass were introduced into War Axe in the fall of 2007, following the chemical renovation of the lake, to provide anglers another unique fishing opportunity. Historically, smallmouth bass were stocked in many Interstate 80 Lakes following their completion in the 1970's. While smallmouth thrived in these lakes, over time they have been mostly displaced by largemouth bass. To help protect the smallmouth bass population in this lake, there will be no harvest of smallmouth allowed at War Axe.



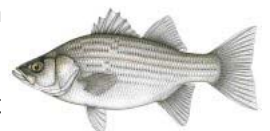
Walleye/Sauger

Although normally known as a large lake or reservoir fish, walleye and sauger can be caught in some of the Interstate Lakes. Walleye are currently stocked in Sandy Channel #8 and have previously been stocked in Mormon Island West to provide an additional predator species and to provide angling opportunities for anglers who cannot fish the large reservoirs where walleye are normally caught. Sauger have been stocked at Blue Hole West for the past several years and it currently has a fair population of fish up to 20 inches. There is a 15-inch minimum size limit on walleye and sauger in effect for all of the Interstate Lakes.



Wipers

A wiper stocking and feeding program has been implemented at Windmill #3 and Ft. Kearny #4, with the goal to provide anglers the chance to catch large wipers. The program was initiated in 2003 and wipers from that first stocking are about 22 inches. Additional smaller wipers are annually stocked in these two lakes. Special regulations for these wiper lakes include an 18-inch minimum size limit and a daily bag limit of one fish.



Other Species (continued)

Yellow Perch

Normally thought of as a species found only in more northern latitudes, yellow perch can be caught in many of the Interstate 80 lakes. Advanced fingerling perch are currently stocked at Windmill #2, Fort Kearny #5, Sandy Channel #8 and Cozad. Perch can also be caught at Windmill #5, Bufflehead, and Kea West.



Angler Access/Boat Ramps

Shoreline access for anglers at the Interstate Lakes is generally very good, but is best at Mormon Island, Cheyenne, War Axe, Windmill, Ft. Kearny, Sandy Channel and Union Pacific. Handicapped accessible fishing piers are also available at Mormon Island West, Windmill #2, and Fort Kearny #7. For anglers who prefer to fish from a boat, improved concrete boat ramps are available at Bassway Strip (West Lake), Bufflehead, Kearney Interchange, Coot Shallows, Sandy Channel (Lake #8), Dogwood East, Cozad and East Gothenburg. All types of boats are allowed on these eight lakes, but a 5 mph/no wake rule is enforced. Improved gravel ramps are available at War Axe, Kea West, Union Pacific and West Blue Hole. West Blue Hole has a 5 mph/no wake rule, while War Axe, Union Pacific and Kea West are electric motors only. The remainder of the Interstate lakes allow either electric motors only or no boats, so please refer to the boating guide for additional information on these lakes: <http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/boating/pdfs/boatguide.pdf>



Mormon Island Fishing Pier



Bufflehead Boat Ramp



Bassway Strip Boat Ramp

Interstate 80 Lakes — Additional Information

Renovations

War Axe was chemically treated with the fish toxicant rotenone during August 2007. The fish population at War Axe was dominated by common carp and gizzard shad and the abundance of game fish had severely declined. The lake has been restocked with smallmouth bass, redear sunfish and channel catfish.

Regulations

Several new regulations regarding the Interstate 80 lakes went into effect on January 1, 2008.

The daily bag limit for channel catfish has been reduced to three fish per day on all of the I-80 lakes east of Gothenburg. The catfish populations in these lakes are maintained by stocking programs and reducing the daily bag limit will help to spread the harvest out among anglers.

Another regulation regarding channel catfish went into effect at Fort Kearny Lake #2 and Windmill Lake #3, as both of these lakes have been added to the list of the catch and release only lakes for channel catfish. The protection of channel catfish on these lakes should improve catfish quality and will provide anglers opportunity to catch larger catfish.

The other major regulation change pertaining to I-80 lakes is the addition of War Axe as a catch and release only lake for black bass and a reduced daily bag limit of 10 panfish. War Axe was renovated and restocked with smallmouth bass, redear sunfish and channel catfish to provide anglers a unique fishing opportunity.

Other special regulations for the Interstate Lakes that have been in effect for several years include the following.

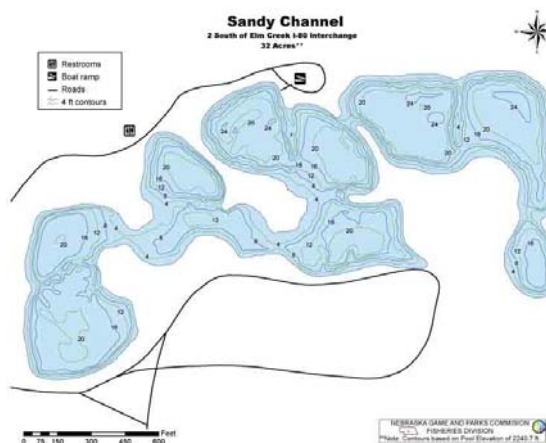
Cheyenne and West Wood River Lakes are catch and release only for largemouth bass.

Special regulations are also in effect for Windmill, Fort Kearny, and Mormon Island State Recreation Areas. These include a reduced daily bag limit on panfish (10 fish per day) and a reduced daily bag limit on channel catfish (3 fish per day). In addition, there is an eight-inch minimum size limit for bluegill at Mormon Island and Windmill #4. There is also an 18-inch minimum size limit and a daily bag limit of one for wipers at Windmill #3 and Fort Kearney #4.

Please see the current 2008 Fishing Guide for more details on these and other regulations. The guide can be viewed on-line at: <http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/fishing/guides/fishguide/2008FishGuide.pdf>

Lake Maps

Several of the Interstate Lakes have been surveyed by the Fisheries Division lake mapping crew and detailed bathymetric maps are available on the Game and Parks web page. These maps, as well as other lake maps can be viewed at <http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/fishing/programs/lakemapping/lakemapping.asp>



For additional information about fisheries management on the Interstate Lakes, please contact the NGPC Kearney office at 308-865-5310 or by email at the addresses listed below.

District Supervisor: Brad Newcomb, brad.newcomb@ngpc.ne.gov

Biologist: Brad Eifert, brad.eifert@ngpc.ne.gov